JOHN BRAY – FRUIT FARMER

by Bob Coar

Cartoon Archeology is not an exact science . . . actually. It's not even a science. Therefore, it's not surprising that the

period in which John Bray went all Green Acres is so difficult to excavate. Forensics begin with a news article dated March 9, 1909 in the *Poughkeepsie Eagle News*.

Highland News

Mr. John Randolph Bray, who has gained fame as the creator of "Johnny and the Teddy Bears," which he draws for "Judge" every week, has bought the J. P. Whitley farm on Vineyard Avenue, Highland, and together with his family and father, the Rev. E. A. Bray, will make his home there in the future. The farm consists of about 80 acres, is delightfully located and abounds in historic and artistic hills, which fact induced Mr. Bray to make the purchase. The purchase price was $10,000. There are three houses, a good barn and other out buildings on the place and also a number of fruit trees. It is reported that Mr. Bray will erect several studios and towers among the hills on the west end of the farm. The sale was made through the agency of Edgar Elmendorf.

The deed to the property reveals a bit more.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the said parties of the first part have hereunto set their hands and seals the day and year first above written.

In the presence of

A. D. Lent

Mrs. Ida T. Hasbrouck (SEAL)
Mrs. Mary E. Townsend (SEAL)

STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF ULSTER SS:
TOWN OF LLOYD

On this twenty first day of March, in the year one thousand nine hundred and ten, before me personally came IDA HASBROUCK and MARY ELLEN TOWNSEND, to me known, and known to me to be the individuals described in and who executed the within instrument and they severally duly acknowledged to me that they have executed the same.

A. D. Lent,
Notary Public, Ulster County.

A true record entered

Mar. 24, 1910 at 11;25 A. M.

Clerk.

THIS INDENTURE, made the first day of October, in the year One thousand nine hundred and nine;

BETWEEN JENNY S. WHITTLEY of the town of Lloyd, in the County of Ulster and State of New York, party of the first part, and

MARGARET BRAY of the same place, party of the second part,

WITNESSETH, that the said party of the first part, in consideration of Ten thousand and no/100 Dollars, lawful money of the United States, paid by the party of the second part, does hereby grant and release unto the said party of the second part, his heirs and assigns forever,

ALL THAT CERTAIN LOT, PIECE OR PARCEL OF LAND situate in the town of Lloyd, in the County of Ulster and State of New York, devised by Henry Deyo, deceased, to Alva Deyo and Luther Deyo, beginning at the middle of the public highway, formerly the Highland and Modena Turnpike Road and in the line of lands formerly of Luther Deyo, and runs thence north forty nine degrees west seventy four chains ninety five links to a heap of stones; thence south thirty six degrees west eleven chains and eighty one links to a white oak tree and heap of stones thence south fifty degrees thirty minutes east seventy four chains and twenty links to the middle of highway; thence along said highway north forty two degrees east nine chains sixty two links to place of beginning. Containing seventy nine acres of land be the same more or less; Being the same premises conveyed by May H. Herrmann asExecutrix &c. of William F. H. Herrmann to Jenny S. Whittley by deed bearing date July 2, 1906, and recorded in Ulster County Clerk's Office in Book No. 395 of Deeds at page 557.

TOGETHER with the appurtenances and all the estate and rights of the said party of the first part in and to the said premises.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the above granted premises, unto the said party of the second part, his heirs and assigns forever.

And the said Jenny S. Whittley party of the first part, does covenant with said party of the second part as follows:-

FIRST,- That the said party of the first part, is seized of the said premises in fee simple, and has good right to convey the same.

SECOND,- That the party of the second part shall quietly enjoy the said premises.

THIRD,- That the said premises are free from encumbrances, except a mortgage of $3500 which Sarah B. Angevine now holds, and which the party of the first part assumes as a part of the consideration hereof.

FOURTH,- That the party of the first part will execute or procure any further

necessary assurance of the title to said premises.

FIFTH,- That the said party of the first part will forever warrant the title to said premises.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the said party of the first part has hereunto set her hand and seal, the day and year first above written.

In the presence of

Andrew Wright Lent. Jenny S. Whittley (SEAL)

John P. Whittley --

STATE OF NEW YORK
COUNTY OF ULSTER SS:
TOWN OF LLOYD

Onthis tenth day of November, in the year one thousand nine hundred and nine, before me, personally came JENNY S. WHITTLEY, to me known and known to me to be the individual described in, and who executed thewithin instrument, and she thereupon duly acknowledged to me that she had executed the same.

Andrew Wright Lent,
Notary Public.

A true record entered
Mar. 24, 1910 at 11;25 A. M.

Edmund Hamilton
Clerk.

THIS INDENTURE, made the 26th day of February, in the year one thousand nine hundred and ten.

BETWEEN EDMUND C. NEHER and ADDIE T. NEHER, his wife, of the town of Saugerties, County of Ulster and State of New York, parties of the first part, and

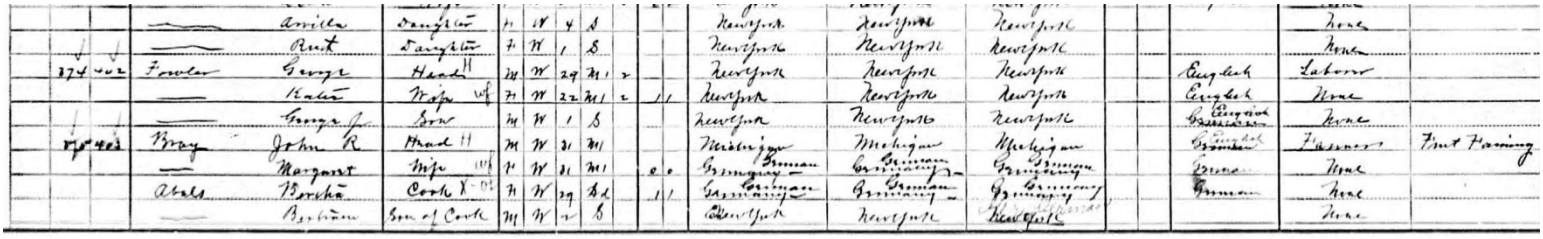
SOPHIA C. VALK of the town of Saugerties, County of Ulster and State of New York, party of the second part.

WITNESSETH, that the said parties of the first part, in consideration of the sum of One Dollar and other good and valuable considerations, ($1.00), to them duly paid, have sold, and by these presents, do grant and convey to the said party of the second part, her heirs and assigns,

ALL THAT TRACT OR PARCEL OF LAND situate in the town of Saugerties, County of Ulster and State of New York, being all that certain piece or parcel of land on which Wyntje Myer lately lived, bounded and described generally as follows, viz:- On the north by lands of Charles Mower and Elliott; on the east by lands of Charles Mower; on the south and southeast by lands of Peter Ostrander and lands of Harry Wells formerly of Frederick M. Wells and on the west by lands of Charles Mower and the public highway leading to Asbury. Containing fifty eight acres and seven tenths of an acre of land. Excepting therefrom two acres sold to Charles W. Taylor and being the same premises conveyed to Jarius L. Richardson by William D. Brinnier, Referee by deed dated March 9th, 1905, and recorded in Ulster County Clerk's Office in Book of Deeds No. 386 at page 439. Being the same premises conveyed to Edmund C. Neher and Addie T. Neher, his wife, by Jarius L. Richardson and Adelia M. Richardson, his wife by deed dated March 13th 1907, and re orded in Ulster County Clerk's Office on the 14th day of March, 1907, in Book No. 401 of Deeds at page 300.

WITH THE APPURTENANCES, and all the estate, title and interest therein of the said parties of the first part. And the said parties of the first part do hereby covenant and agree to and with the said party of the second part, her heirs and assigns, that the premises thus conveyed in the quiet and peaceable possession of the said party of the second part, her heirs and assigns they will forever warrant and defend against any person whomsoever lawfully claiming the same or any part thereof.

On the next census John Bray declared himself to be a fruit farmer.

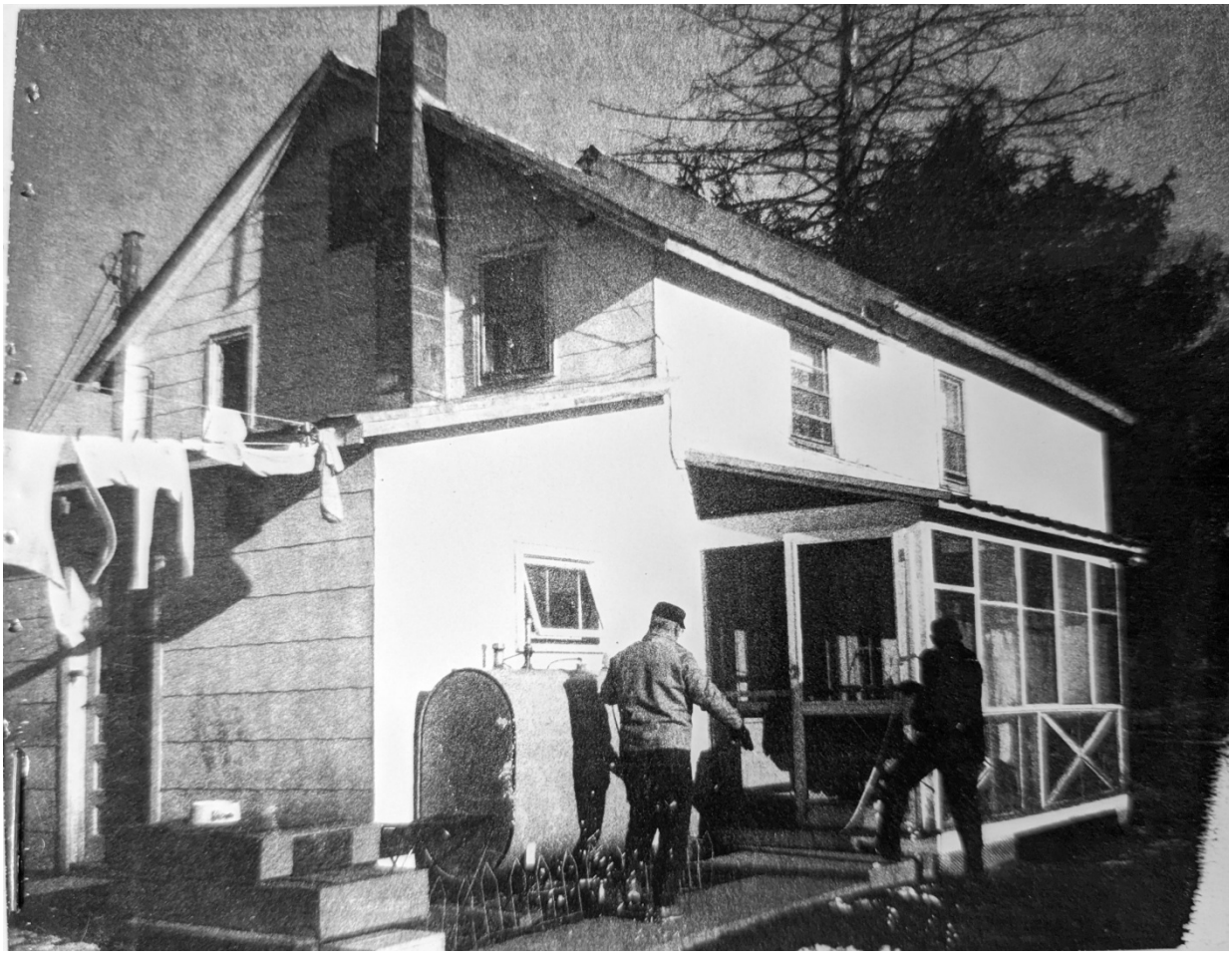


Until recently we've been searching for the Bray farm in the wrong place, if anyone was searching at all. Common belief, based on incorrect info from a Bray descendant, put the farm in Highland Falls, New York. In reality, it was located across the Hudson River from Poughkeepsie, in Highland New York, part of the town of Lloyd.

I received this deed from the Ulster County Clerk in Kingston. The following photos were provided by the town of Lloyd's historian Joan Kelley with this *caveat*

> **Based on my research, the research done by the others copied on this note and the copies of the deeds you sent, I am FAIRLY CERTAIN these are the photographs of the buildings that were on the property described in the deeds. I have not visited the site, but I understand all these buildings have been torn down.**

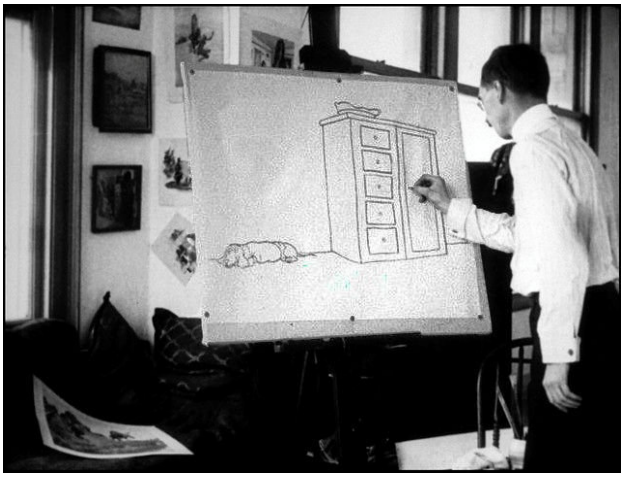
Theses seem to show the front and back of what I think would be the main house.



Theses two houses are near each other.

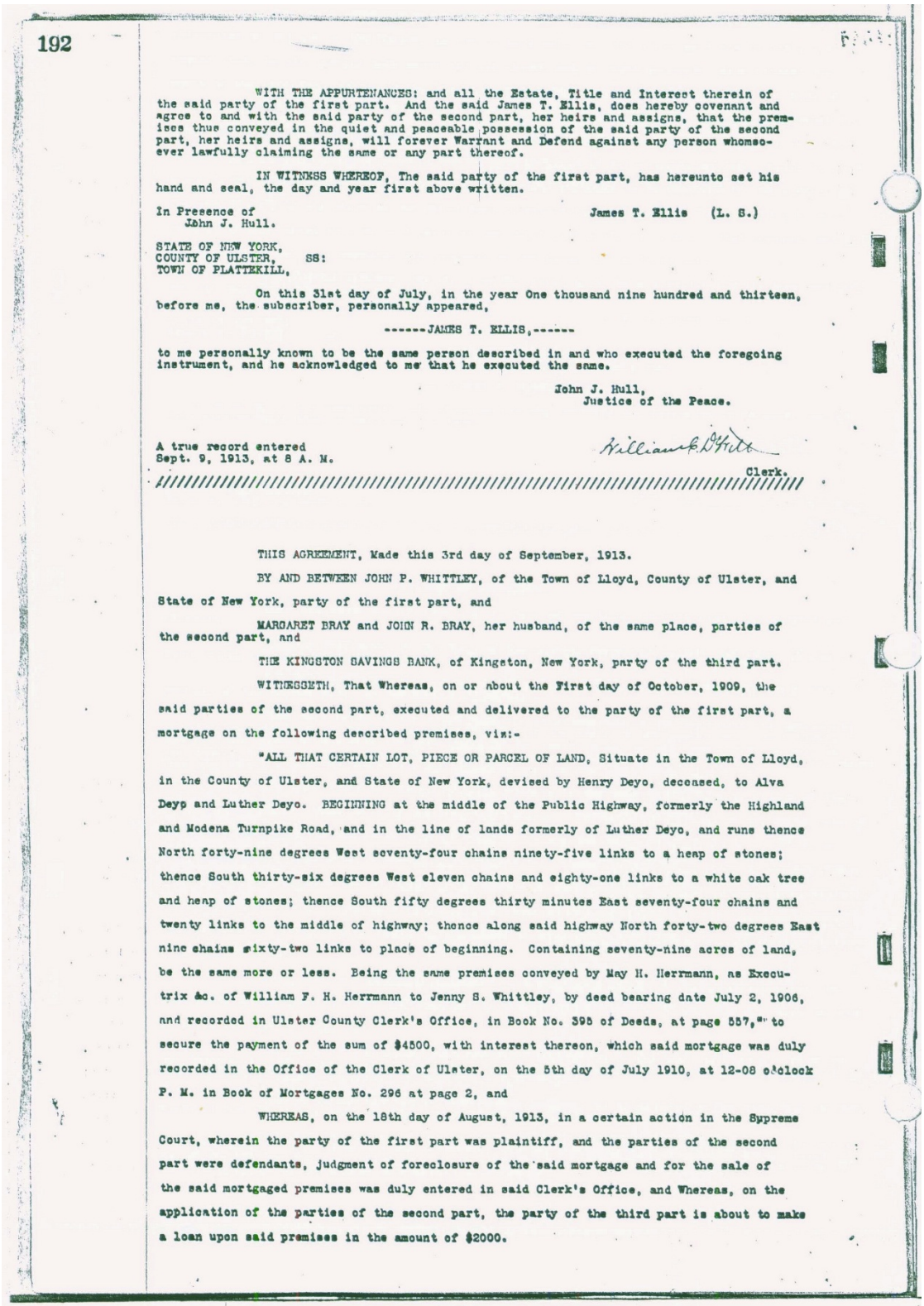
There's a barn.

And some other buildings.



The Bray farm is of interest because it is probably the first place in the world where a production facility was set up for the express purpose of making animated short films. I had assumed that the live-action portion of THE ARTIST'S DREAM was filmed on the farm, but I don't see three windows in a row like in the movie on any of the buildings in the photos.

The animation of the dachshund is said to have been done in John Bray's studio on the farm. This led to Pathé contracting Bray to make the COLONEL HEEZA LIAR series. Expenses incurred in producing the cartoon series seems to have disrupted Bray's finances.



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WITH THE APPURTENANCES: and all the Estate, Title and Interest therein of the said party of the first part. And the said James T. Ellis, does hereby covenant and agree to and with the said party of the second part, her heirs and assigns, that the premises thus conveyed in the quiet and peaceable possession of the said party of the second part, her heirs and assigns, will forever Warrant and Defend against any person whomsoever lawfully claiming the same or any part thereof.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, The said party of the first part, has hereunto set his hand and seal, the day and year first above written.

In Presence of
John J. Hull.

James T. Ellis (L. S.)

STATE OF NEW YORK,
COUNTY OF ULSTER, SS:
TOWN OF PLATTEKILL,

On this 31st day of July, in the year One thousand nine hundred and thirteen, before me, the subscriber, personally appeared,

------JAMES T. ELLIS,------

to me personally known to be the same person described in and who executed the foregoing instrument, and he acknowledged to me that he executed the same.

John J. Hull,
Justice of the Peace.

A true record entered
Sept. 9, 1913, at 8 A. M.

William K. Hitt
Clerk.

THIS AGREEMENT, Made this 3rd day of September, 1913.

BY AND BETWEEN JOHN P. WHITTLEY, of the Town of Lloyd, County of Ulster, and State of New York, party of the first part, and

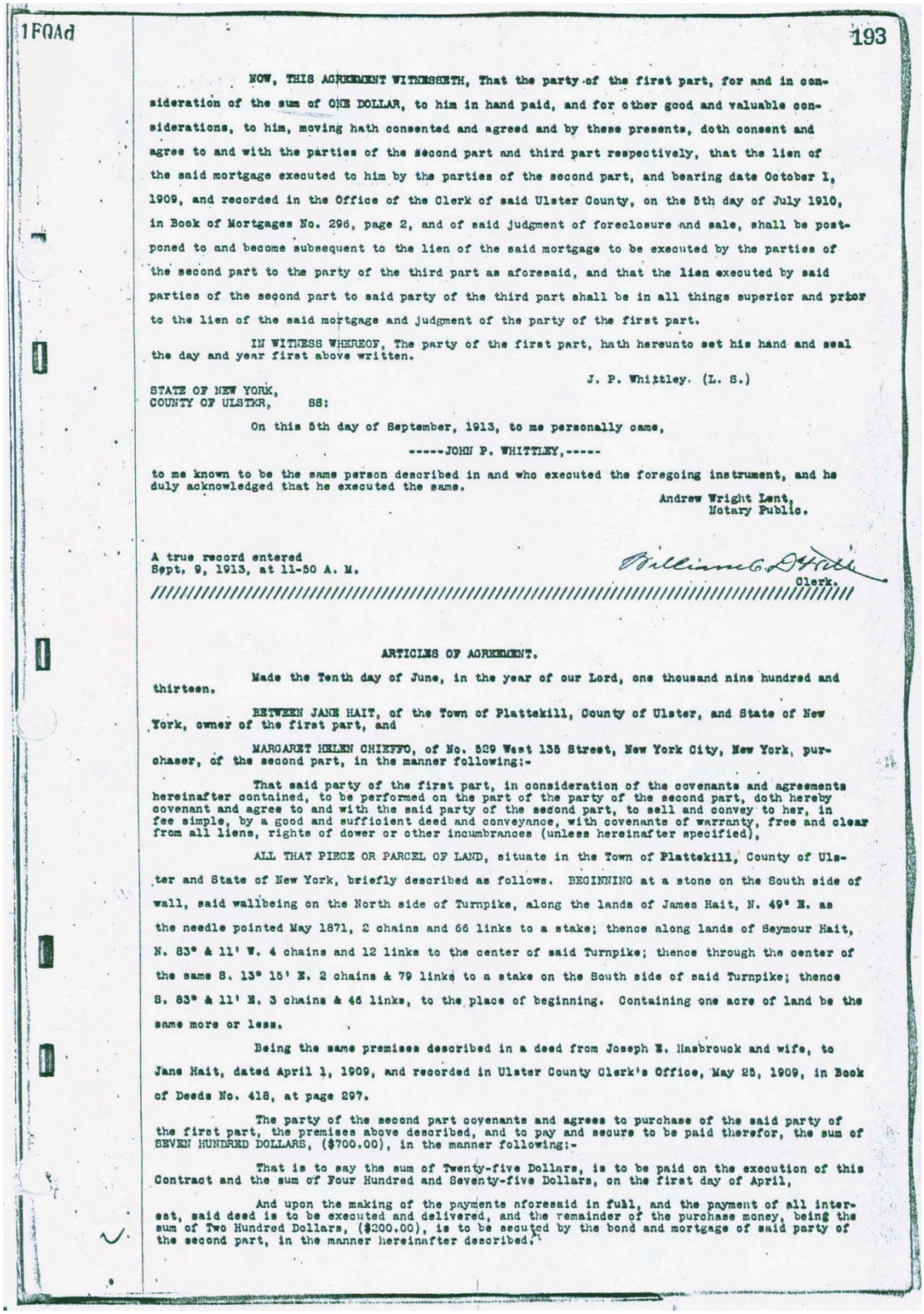
MARGARET BRAY and JOHN R. BRAY, her husband, of the same place, parties of the second part, and

THE KINGSTON SAVINGS BANK, of Kingston, New York, party of the third part.

WITNESSETH, That Whereas, on or about the First day of October, 1909, the said parties of the second part, executed and delivered to the party of the first part, a mortgage on the following described premises, viz:-

"ALL THAT CERTAIN LOT, PIECE OR PARCEL OF LAND, Situate in the Town of Lloyd, in the County of Ulster, and State of New York, devised by Henry Deyo, deceased, to Alva Deyo and Luther Deyo. BEGINNING at the middle of the Public Highway, formerly the Highland and Modena Turnpike Road, and in the line of lands formerly of Luther Deyo, and runs thence North forty-nine degrees West seventy-four chains ninety-five links to a heap of stones; thence South thirty-six degrees West eleven chains and eighty-one links to a white oak tree and heap of stones; thence South fifty degrees thirty minutes East seventy-four chains and twenty links to the middle of highway; thence along said highway North forty-two degrees East nine chains sixty-two links to place of beginning. Containing seventy-nine acres of land, be the same more or less. Being the same premises conveyed by May H. Herrmann, as Executrix &c. of William F. H. Herrmann to Jenny S. Whittley, by deed bearing date July 2, 1906, and recorded in Ulster County Clerk's Office, in Book No. 395 of Deeds, at page 557," to secure the payment of the sum of $4500, with interest thereon, which said mortgage was duly recorded in the Office of the Clerk of Ulster, on the 5th day of July 1910, at 12-08 o'clock P. M. in Book of Mortgages No. 296 at page 2, and

WHEREAS, on the 18th day of August, 1913, in a certain action in the Supreme Court, wherein the party of the first part was plaintiff, and the parties of the second part were defendants, judgment of foreclosure of the said mortgage and for the sale of the said mortgaged premises was duly entered in said Clerk's Office, and Whereas, on the application of the parties of the second part, the party of the third part is about to make a loan upon said premises in the amount of $2000.



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NOW, THIS AGREEMENT WITNESSETH, That the party of the first part, for and in consideration of the sum of ONE DOLLAR, to him in hand paid, and for other good and valuable considerations, to him, moving hath consented and agreed and by these presents, doth consent and agree to and with the parties of the second part and third part respectively, that the lien of the said mortgage executed to him by the parties of the second part, and bearing date October 1, 1909, and recorded in the Office of the Clerk of said Ulster County, on the 5th day of July 1910, in Book of Mortgages No. 296, page 2, and of said judgment of foreclosure and sale, shall be postponed to and become subsequent to the lien of the said mortgage to be executed by the parties of the second part to the party of the third part as aforesaid, and that the lien executed by said parties of the second part to said party of the third part shall be in all things superior and prior to the lien of the said mortgage and judgment of the party of the first part.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, The party of the first part, hath hereunto set his hand and seal the day and year first above written.

J. P. Whittley. (L. S.)

STATE OF NEW YORK,
COUNTY OF ULSTER, SS:

On this 5th day of September, 1913, to me personally came,

-----JOHN P. WHITTLEY,-----

to me known to be the same person described in and who executed the foregoing instrument, and he duly acknowledged that he executed the same.

Andrew Wright Lent,
Notary Public.

A true record entered
Sept, 9, 1913, at 11-50 A. M.

William C. D'Arcy
Clerk.

ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT.

Made the Tenth day of June, in the year of our Lord, one thousand nine hundred and thirteen.

BETWEEN JANE HAIT, of the Town of Plattekill, County of Ulster, and State of New York, owner of the first part, and

MARGARET HELEN CHIEFFO, of No. 529 West 135 Street, New York City, New York, purchaser, of the second part, in the manner following:-

That said party of the first part, in consideration of the covenants and agreements hereinafter contained, to be performed on the part of the party of the second part, doth hereby covenant and agree to and with the said party of the second part, to sell and convey to her, in fee simple, by a good and sufficient deed and conveyance, with covenants of warranty, free and clear from all liens, rights of dower or other incumbrances (unless hereinafter specified),

ALL THAT PIECE OR PARCEL OF LAND, situate in the Town of Plattekill, County of Ulster and State of New York, briefly described as follows. BEGINNING at a stone on the South side of wall, said wallbeing on the North side of Turnpike, along the lands of James Hait, N. 49° E. as the needle pointed May 1871, 2 chains and 66 links to a stake; thence along lands of Seymour Hait, N. 83° & 11' W. 4 chains and 12 links to the center of said Turnpike; thence through the center of the same S. 13° 15' E. 2 chains & 79 links to a stake on the South side of said Turnpike; thence S. 83° & 11' E. 3 chains & 46 links, to the place of beginning. Containing one acre of land be the same more or less.

Being the same premises described in a deed from Joseph E. Hasbrouck and wife, to Jane Hait, dated April 1, 1909, and recorded in Ulster County Clerk's Office, May 25, 1909, in Book of Deeds No. 418, at page 297.

The party of the second part covenants and agrees to purchase of the said party of the first part, the premises above described, and to pay and secure to be paid therefor, the sum of SEVEN HUNDRED DOLLARS, ($700.00), in the manner following:-

That is to say the sum of Twenty-five Dollars, is to be paid on the execution of this Contract and the sum of Four Hundred and Seventy-five Dollars, on the first day of April,

And upon the making of the payments aforesaid in full, and the payment of all interest, said deed is to be executed and delivered, and the remainder of the purchase money, being the sum of Two Hundred Dollars, ($200.00), is to be secured by the bond and mortgage of said party of the second part, in the manner hereinafter described.

Eight COLONEL HEEZA LIAR cartoons were released before Bray moved production off the farm and into a Manhattan studio. During that time John and Margaret kept an apartment a block from Columbia University's campus . . . leading us to –

THE NEXT MYSTERY:

MARGARET BRAY AND COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Bray family tradition also holds that while John worked on THE ARTIST'S DREAM, Margaret was the family bread-winner. Bray family tradition also holds that Margaret worked for Columbia University as a translator. I checked with Columbia three times and they have no record of this.

From what I understand, Columbia University was involved in preparations for the First World War. Perhaps Margaret was there to translate German documents for some classified military intelligence program. The Brays did have an apartment in 1914 at 350 West 113TH Street, one block from campus. Columbia eventually bought that building for student housing. The Brays moved a block from there in 1915, remaining in close proximity to the university.

So, faulty memories not withstanding, it appears Margaret Bray had some connection to Columbia University. As evidence for this thesis I present the following real estate notices from New York newspapers.

AUGUST 1918

BUYER OF MARIMPOL COURT.

Mrs. Margaret Bray of the Bray Studios is the buyer of the six story Marimpol Court apartments at 521 and 523 West 122d street, sold last week by Thomas J. O'Reilly for the New York Life Insurance Company. This is Mrs. Bray's initial apartment investment.

What is interesting is that this building was situated two short blocks north of Columbia's campus. Furthermore, the New York Life Insurance Company Margaret bought it from had the University's president Nicholas Murray Butler on its board of directors.

SEPTEMBER 1918

(Manhattan Island, north of 110th street.)
122D ST, n s, 212.6 w Amsterdam av, 62.6x 90.11—N Y Life Ins Co to Margaret Bray, 23 E 28th st, b and s, c a g, Sept 1; atty Title G & T Co, 176 Bway $81,000

Again, bought from Nicholas Murray Butler's group. Barely a stone's-throw from the school. During this same period Bray Studios' board member/legal counsel Watson B. Robinson went into real estate as well with his Lower New York Realty Corporation. Robinson was a close friend of John Bray, and Robinson's real estate partners were all involved with the studio in some manner.

To me this indicates some link between Margaret Bray and Columbia University, though I'm not sure what it is. Anyway, Margaret began flipping the properties, so perhaps she was just a go-between.

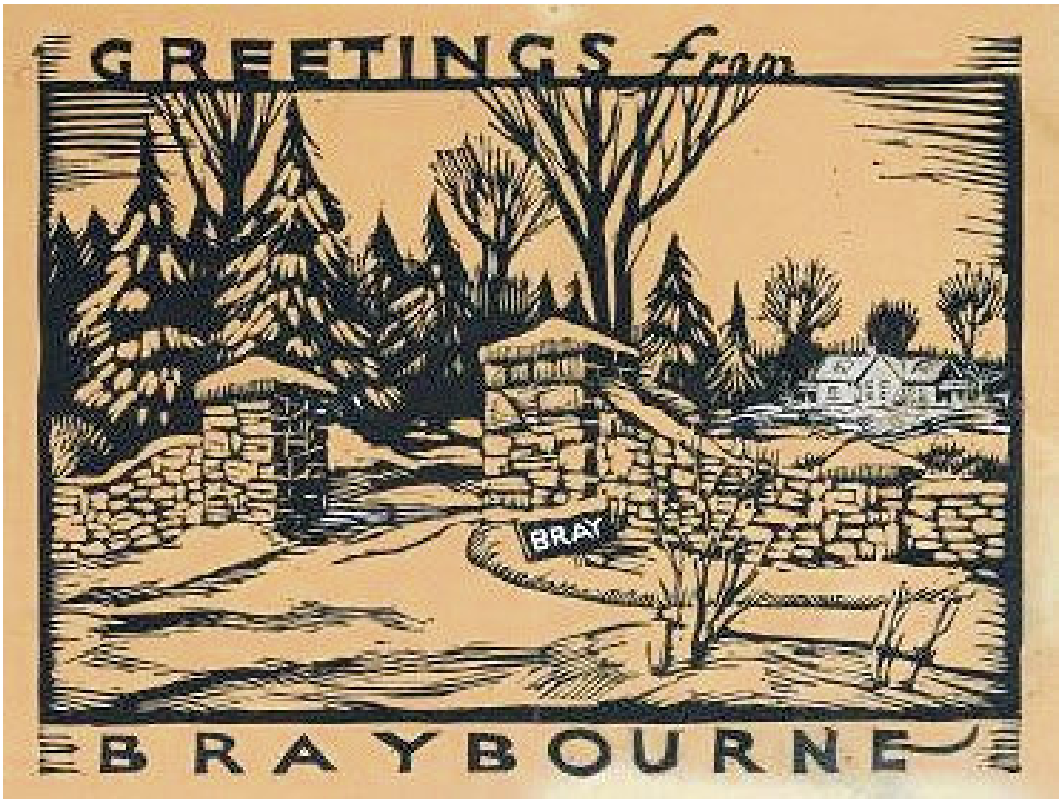
April 1919

WEST 122D STREET—Marimpol Court, a six story elevator apartment house at 521 and 523 West 122d street, was sold by Mrs. Margaret Bray, who acquired the property last August from the New York Life Insurance Company. It occupies a plot 50x100 and was held at $110,000.

June 1919, another building in the immediate vicinity -

WEST 124TH STREET—Margaret Bray resold through Sidney B. Hickox the six story apartment, 49.6x100, at 507 and 509 West 124th street to M. M. Smith.

The Brays seem to have abandoned Highland NY by this time for Norwalk, Connecticut on a plot of land they would dub Braybourne.



The family donated boxes of documents to the Library of Congress, so perhaps some answers are contained there. Maybe some pictures of the farm that could confirm these. I'm told by an extremely reliable source that a collector showed him moving footage of the Bray farm.